



# SOUTHEAST FISHERIES BULLETIN

National Marine Fisheries Service, Southeast Regional Office  
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<http://sero.nmfs.NOAA.gov>

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:**

November 16, 2004  
NR04-049

## **OCTOBER 15, 2004, CONTROL DATE ESTABLISHED AS AN ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENT FOR THE COMMERCIAL GROUPER FISHERY OF THE GULF OF MEXICO**

On **November 16, 2004**, the National Marine Fisheries Service (NOAA Fisheries) published an advanced notice of proposed rulemaking establishing a control date of October 15, 2004, for the commercial grouper fishery operating in the exclusive economic zone of the Gulf of Mexico. That notice is intended to inform the public the Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council (GMFMC) is considering the establishment of an individual fishing quota (IFQ) for the commercial grouper fishery of the Gulf of Mexico. To discourage accelerated effort to develop a catch history in the grouper fishery before the IFQ is implemented, it is the intent of the GMFMC to establish IFQ eligibility criteria based on catch histories prior to October 15, 2004.

### **Request for Comments: Dates and Addresses**

Comments on the establishment of a control date for this fishery must be submitted by December 16, 2004. Comments should apply to the control date as an eligibility requirement for an IFQ, not the IFQ. Comments on the notice of a control date may be submitted by any of the following methods:

E-mail: 0648-AS88. [Proposed@noaa.gov](mailto:Proposed@noaa.gov). Use  
0648-AS88. Proposed as the subject.

Federal e-Rulemaking Portal:  
<http://www.regulations.gov>. Follow the on-site  
instructions for submitting comments.

Mail: Steve Branstetter, Southeast Regional Office,  
NMFS, 9721 Executive Center Drive N., St.  
Petersburg, FL 33702 FAX: 727-570-5583

Mail: Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council,  
3018 U.S. Highway 301 North, Suite 1000, Tampa,  
Florida 33619 FAX: 813-225-7015

### **Background:**

Should the GMFMC take future action to further restrict participation and effort in the grouper fishery, they may use October 15, 2004, as a possible control date regarding the eligibility of catch histories. Consideration of a control date does not commit the GMFMC or NOAA Fisheries to any particular management regime or criteria for eligibility in the commercial grouper fishery. The GMFMC may or may not use this control date as part of the qualifying criteria for an IFQ or other management program for the Gulf of Mexico grouper fishery. Fishermen are not guaranteed future participation in a fishery regardless of their entry date or intensity of participation in the fishery before or after the control date under consideration. The GMFMC subsequently may choose a different control date or they may choose a management regime that does not make use of a control date. The GMFMC also may choose to take no further action to control entry or access to the fisheries, in which case the control date may not be used.

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